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Community Voices — by State Senator Jim Costa

High-speed rail: 300,000 jobs

For years, I have championed high-speed rail because I view the addition of high-speed trains as an essential element of California's transportation system. In order to meet the needs of our ever-growing population, we must have safe and reliable airports, highways and rail. All of these will be needed to provide transportation to the 45 million people who will live and work in this great state in 2020 — and the nearly 60 million in 2040.

The experience of Japan and Western Europe, where nations are producing the second and third generation of high-speed train systems, provides California with a template for developing a system that is safe, efficient and financially viable. I believe we should not re-invent the wheel — or the track — in developing high-speed trains in California. Rather, we should learn from nations that have successfully, and profitably, built and operated such systems.

An important lesson California must learn is how to develop the public-private partnerships needed to implement high-speed rail. If done properly, we can build a system that will generate real economic benefit to the state for years to come. The California High-Speed Rail Authority's efforts can spark a new round of technological developments in the state that could match the personal computer revolution.

To that end, the California High-Speed Rail Authority intends to design the system in California, manufacture many of the parts and assemble the trains

here. The authority also will ensure that the operators of the system are based in the state. The contracts to design and build high-speed rail would be two to four times that of the BART extension to San Francisco International Airport or the central trench of the Alameda Corridor project in Los Angeles.

All told, this would be the largest public works project in the state's history and yield more than 300,000 construction jobs. Nearly 80 percent of the \$25 billion capital costs are expected to be for actual construction. The Authority's capital estimates actually understate the tremendous economic benefits that will occur with the construction and operation of 20 to 25 stations throughout the state.

The Authority is looking to develop an advanced high-speed train technology industry that will yield ongoing engineering and construction jobs in California. The numbers of jobs created could rival those of the state's aerospace industry at its peak.

It is my belief that an investment in this 21st century mode of transportation will return benefits to virtually every citizen in California. It will strengthen the state's infrastructure and enhance our quality of life just as the state's water project, highways and the university system have.

A recent study by the authority shows that a high-speed train system will yield benefits of more than \$2 for every \$1 invested, an impressive cost/benefit ratio for any public works project.

In short, California's high-speed rail system will create jobs and generate new businesses that will produce long-term benefits for all Californians.

State Senator Jim Costa (D-Fresno) represents portions of Kern County.

*Community Voices is an expanded commentary that may contain up to 500 words.*